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ABSTRACT

Since Canada and the U.S. share the common problem of declining enrollment, this paper studies the current situation in the States and assesses the merits and shortcomings of the nonheroic strategy being pursued there. The author credits the failure to develop a comprehensive, coherent plan in even one state to several factors, including the presence of many participants in the decision-making process, the proliferation of educational objectives, the nonquantifiable character of educational accomplishments, and the increasingly unpredictable nature of the educational environment. He concludes that the nonheroic style has several merits, including pragmatism, but lacks the stabilizing influence of historical perspective or a sense of destiny. As an alternative to aimless drift or coercive master planning, the author suggests implementing principles based on Jack P. Gibb's trust-level formulation and outlines possible reforms. (Author/WD)

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WORKING PAPER NO. 15

A NON-HEROIC STRATEGY FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF DECLINE: AN EXAMINATION OF THE AMERICAN APPROACH TO EDUCATIONAL RETRENCHMENT

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MAY, 1978

COMMISSION ON DECLINING SCHOOL ENROLMENTS IN ONTARIO (CODE)

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A NON-HEROIC STRATEGY FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF DECLINE: AN EXAMINATION OF THE AMERICAN APPROACH TO EDUCATIONAL RETRENCHMENT

I INTRODUCTION

Since education is a constitutional responsibility of the state governments, the U.S.A. would appear to offer a sample of fifty distinct approaches to declining school enrolment. However, uniformity is more in evidence among them than diversity. Taken together they illustrate the strategy of incrementalism described by Braybrooke and Lindblom. Some states have developed far-ranging analyses on paper; some states have enacted a few piece-meal palliative measures; other states seem to be drifting with little anticipatory planning or legislative action. But not one state has implemented a comprehensive, coherent set of measures to cope in a systematic way with all the ramifications of educational retrenchment. Not one state out of fifty! The focus of this paper is (1) to examine some of the causes for this collective failure on the part of fifty jurisdictions to respond in a decisive and fundamental way to the unprecedented challenge of school decline and (2) to assess the merits and possible shortcomings of that non-heroic strategy.

II ANALYSIS OF THE DECISION SITUATION

K.J. Radford of York University has postulated that the major factors affecting the method of resolution of a decision problem are:

1. whether the decision situation can be resolved by a single individual, organization or entity or whether many such participants have the power to influence the outcome;
2. whether a single objective or multiple objectives are involved;
3. whether or not measures of benefits and costs can be expressed in quantitative terms;
4. whether the decision is to be made under conditions of certainty or whether uncertainty is involved in the situation under consideration.

Radford divides organizational decision processes into two broad categories: (a) "programmed" or "completely specified" decisions are those that are encountered repeatedly in essentially the same form and that become sufficiently well understood that a completely specified procedure can be used in their routine resolution; (b) "non-programmed" or "non-specifiable" decisions are those that cannot be resolved solely by use of a prespecified procedure. In Radford's judgment, the development of models of decision process and accompanying information systems has tended to concentrate on support of the more routine decision problems. He points

out that the deterministic models that have been developed in operational research refer only to decision situations in which there is a single prime objective, well-understood quantitative measures of benefits and costs, and no uncertainty. "Much less effort has been devoted to servicing the information needs of the more complex organizational decision processes that involve many participants, multiple objectives, benefits and costs that are not readily quantifiable and considerable uncertainty."

If Radford's analysis of the state of the administrative sciences is valid, then one immediate explanation for the failure of all fifty American state governments to introduce approaches involving comprehensive models and the goal of a uniquely optimum solution becomes evident: the appropriate methodology has not yet been developed for dealing with "wicked", or complex, decision problems of the order of educational retrenchment. To the extent that American scholars have generally focussed their efforts on formal analytic procedures, rational processes of optimization, and highly quantitative approaches to decision research, they have neglected the more complex decision problems of the diffuse, non-specifiable type.

It seems useful now to examine briefly each of the four major factors identified by Radford as critical in determining problem-solving procedures and to illustrate their significance in the American experience.

1. Many Participants

Policy decisions related to declining school enrolment in the U.S. are made in a volatile political climate strongly influenced by the preferences and actions of participants both within and external to the state.

Two examples of internal pressure groups may suffice. One is the emergence of the so-called "taxpayers' revolt". Even before the serious decline in school enrolments, the American taxpayer seemed reluctant to support increased educational expenditures. Of the 568 bond elections held in various school districts throughout California during the past seven years, only 27.2 per cent were passed with the necessary two-thirds vote. With other economic pressures such as inflation and unemployment now besetting many Americans, the heightened sense of victimization and outrage on the part of the taxpayers (particularly the growing number of those on fixed incomes) cannot be ignored by state legislators.

The second example of an internal organized group of participants is the strongly militant teachers' lobbies. Take, for instance, the New York State United Teachers Union, an AFT affiliate, that serves as an umbrella organization for most teacher groups in the state, including elementary, secondary, community college, and university teachers. At one time there were over 250 separate union groups in New York City alone, whipsawing each other in the competition

for tax resources. With the preeminence of the AFT, this "internal cannibalism" has ended and a concerted drive is sustained at Albany (1) to obtain more State Aid for education at every level and (2) to provide more educational opportunities, on the model of Al Shanker's Educare proposal. The NYSUT has 24-25 practicing attorneys on staff; there are so many outstanding legal cases that they have put them on the computer. The union has gone heavily into lobbying, retaining 5-6 lobbyists at the state capital. The NYSUT puts up about $500,000 for each state election (approximately every two years), contributing campaign funds to friends and fighting against enemies. In addition, the union recruits skilled party workers - teachers, who systematically canvass voters door-to-door, or over the telephone. As part of its strategy to maximize leverage, the union has been successful in forging a powerful consortium with all the other educational groups, including school boards and administrators. As a result, for the last two years there has been only <u>one</u> proposal for a State Aid program, not a multiplicity of competing proposals. This united front severely restricts the freedom of the legislature to design its own "compromise" by selecting preferred features from divergent proposals.

It would appear to be enough of a dilemma for the state governments to reconcile the opposing interests of taxpayers pressing for reduced taxes and teachers' unions fighting for higher State Aid. But the multiplicity of

participants has yet another dimension to it. Besides the various constituent groups that are internal to the state, there are certain external actors who also have a bearing on the state's range of options; these external participants, or potential participants, arise as a by-product of state control over education within an open market characterized by reciprocal accreditation of credentials. By way of hypothetical example, if one state jurisdiction attempted to institute draconian policies that would turn a teacher surplus into a teacher shortage, unemployed professionals from other parts of the country would migrate into the state and effectively subvert the state plan.

In the March-April, 1978, issue of the Harvard Business Review, Professor Bruce R. Scott addresses the question, "How Practical Is National Economic Planning?" His observations on "coherence planning", or the planning of supply to meet demand by industry, are especially relevant:

> In planning to reduce gluts and shortages in an industry, the aim is to balance supply and demand through 1) forecasting demand several years ahead, 2) estimating the productive capacity required to meet that demand, and 3) subtracting existing capacity from the forecast requirement to arrive at an estimate of new investments needed. Reducing shortages in one industry lessens disruptions in others that depend on it for supplies. Reducing excess capacity reduces waste, whether this takes the form of idle plant or of unemployment. As a result, coherence planning improves the functioning of the whole economy.

In his subsequent analysis, Scott points to significant problems in the implementation of such a plan:

> In fact, these problems are so crucial in relation to the benefits of coherence that in France the government, after almost 25 years of experience, has abandoned supply-demand coherence as a goal of planning.
>
> Coherence planning has been truly effective and beneficial only under two conditions: 1) general shortages and 2) a 'closed" economy - that is, an economy where tariffs or quotas are effectively used to control imports.

This diversion into national economic planning will have served its purpose if it has reminded us that, although the states have paramount control over education, they are not sovereign states; they cannot impose barriers to the free movement of people across state boundaries. Being federated with all the other states into an open economy, each state is severely limited as to the kind of unilateral policies it might introduce in the field of education. No state can afford to get too far out of step. In summary, the presence of many participants with power to influence the outcome does affect the decision-making process, sometimes to the point of paralysis.

2. Multiple Objectives

The difficulty in finding rational strategies for coping with school retrenchment is enormously magnified by the fuzzy and ambiguous mission(s) of the educational establishment in the U.S.

Francis A.J. Ianni (1975) defines the central purpose of American education to be "to improve our lot and assure that wisdom acquired in the past informs each new generation's attempts at social improvement". He goes on to identify the drift toward urbanization as the critical social problem of our times:

> For by 1980, 90 percent of our American population will live in cities. And the rest of the world is following in our path. How to educate for urban living must become a critical - if not the most crucial - social concern of our day. How are we to prepare ourselves, and more importantly our children, to live a physically, emotionally, and socially healthy life in the city?
>
> The fact is that we really don't know how to prepare children for urban life. At the heart of our educational system continues to lie a seemingly intractable set of agrarian values...We continue to try to mold children to confused standards.

University commentators are not the only ones to perceive the disutility of conflicted educational objectives. One harried and outspoken administrator in Chicago asserted that schools have been made a social decompression chamber in "an orgy of retroactive social justice".

As a case study in multiple educational objectives the Chicago public school system deserves attention. On March 2, 1976, the Chicago public schools were found in a state of non-compliance with the rules governing elimination of racial segregation in schools and were placed in "probationary recognition status" by the Illinois State Board of Education pending the submission of an acceptable plan.

As a result of those actions, the Board of Education established a City-Wide Advisory Committee, comprised of representatives from business, industry, students, parents, staff, clergy, universities, communications media, and local and state governments, with the task of developing an appropriate student desegregation plan. The resulting report, titled, Equalizing Educational Opportunities: Proposed Plan, was issued on January 12, 1978. A quick scanning of the plan's major components reveals the diversity of goal orientations embedded in the educational enterprise.

Elimination of Mobile Units. Mobile units are movable classrooms which were placed on school grounds in overcrowded schools. These units were perceived to have promoted segregation by keeping students in assigned school boundaries. Prior to September, 1976, there was a total of 1,249 mobile units. Some had been removed during the next two years. The proposed plan offered a three-year timetable for the removal of the remaining 750 units.

Elementary Magnet Schools. The plan called for the cumulative installation of magnet schools or programs in selected elementary schools in each district over a five-year period. These programs will offer high-quality instruction to which parents would willingly send their children, thus maximizing the effectiveness of the voluntary desegregation process. Magnet school programs might be designed around a specific instructional process (e.g. Montessori or team teaching) or might concentrate on a particular area of content (e.g. early childhood, bilingual education, career education, etc.)

Academic Interest Centers. This program is designed with racially balanced quotas to expand "the horizon of the student" by making extensive use of the resources found in museums, universities, media, utility companies, and city, state, and federal departments. This out-of-classroom instruction would involve a minimum period of three weeks. Individual learner needs would be met by providing remediation, enrichment, and/or cultural stimulation.

Clustered Elementary Schools. A cluster is a grouping of three to five elementary schools forming one attendance area. It is hoped that the school cluster concept will promote the development of quality demonstration programs jointly planned by community members and school personnel and thus encourage desegregation on a voluntary basis through enrolment of students in the program of their choice.

Permissive Transfers. To promote the reduction of racial isolation in the Chicago public schools and to relieve overcrowding in certain schools the plan would permit elementary and secondary students to transfer from designated "sending schools" which are overcrowded to designated "receiving schools". Transfer quotas were established for all the schools involved.

Magnet Programs in High Schools. Magnet programs embrace the concept of reducing racial isolation while strengthening educational opportunities on a voluntary basis. Outstanding programs are to be developed that will expose learners to exceptional schooling utilizing assertive involvement of parents and community agencies. Programs would include, but not be limited to, advanced placement courses such as modern dance, photography, woodworking, commerical art, data processing, etc. Staff members were to have specialized training in intergroup relations.

Open Enrolment in General High Schools. Over a period of four years (1978-1981) desegregation of the general high schools will have been accomplished through a program of open enrolment which provides parents and students with a choice of schools and programs. The open enrolment policy is to be coupled with attractive programs in all general high schools as an incentive for enrolment. "Academic isolation", i.e., classroom segregation, within any given high school is expressly forbidden.

Advanced Placement Programs. This concept is reserved for 11th and 12th grade students who are interested and academically qualified. Advanced level programs in academic subject areas would be offered in desegregated settings located throughout the city. Consideration will be given to schedule this program prior to the students' regular school day.

Thematic Vocational High Schools. By 1982, the Board of Education of the City of Chicago is to have implemented a minimum of 15 Thematic Vocational High Schools, each offering different programs in a broad area of vocational/career/professional concentration, involving a total of 20,000-30,000 pupils per year in a desegregated setting. Theme schools would prepare young people for the world of work. Programs would be designed to meet varied levels of academic achievement, and courses in compensatory basic skills are to be offered. Examples of such themes could be Public Service and Law, People-to-People Services, The World of Transportation, and Graphic Arts. Programs should also emphasize developing skills related to community requirements such as housing rehabilitation, flood control, and other long-range city projects.

Handicapped Children in a Desegregation Plan. Whereas various federal acts mandate that the civil rights of all handicapped children be placed in the "least restrictive environment", and whereas the acts also mandate that

handicapped children with very special learning needs must be placed in a program that will meet these needs, the City-Wide Advisory Committee attempted to devise a set of guidelines to govern desegregation in this very troublesome area.

Metropolitan Focus. The program will be a voluntary, two-way interchange between city and suburban schools, designed to foster desegregation. By 1981 at least 1,000 pupils are to be involved. The transportation distance is to be limited to one hour each way in good weather. The Chicago Board of Education is to take the initiative in seeking out suburban boards of education who might wish to collaborate in implementing the metropolitan focus.

Transportation. The Chicago Board of Education will provide transportation wherever necessary to facilitate the movement of students in order to comply with the plan components.

System-Wide Achievement Standards. Each school shall prepare a plan to assure that students will be able to meet the required standards in the shortest period of time. All students will be expected to have attained the grade level requirements before advancement to the next grade. Each school will issue an annual report to parents describing grade level student achievement for the year, including a breakdown of students in each grade performing well above or well below the standards.

Legislative Support, "the problems of large urban school systems are so acute, so massive, and so complex as to demand special and unusual state-level support". Additionally, special financial assistance will be sought from federal agencies. The following excess-cost items were identified:

- planning costs
- research and development costs
- staff development and inservice costs
- community involvement costs
- travel costs
- special services costs (i.e., security home-school liaison activities, intergroup human relations activities)
- special instruction costs (i.e., instructional materials development, tutorial help, competency indicator development, home-school contracts)
- pre-school and summer school activities
- costs associated with small classes (i.e., advanced placement opportunities, career education classes)
- costs associated with facilities upgrading (i.e., replacement of mobile classrooms, remodeling, playground and beautification development)
- costs associated with developing programs to entitle the district to participate in Federal Funding.

As the Chicago Board of Education deliberates on how to proceed with the implementation of the desegregation plan, with its welter of commendable but expensive educational proposals, it finds itself constrained by the naive public assumption that declining enrolments should

mean corresponding declining expenditures. Additionally, the Board finds itself victimized by the inflationary factor, illustrated by the $5,000,000 increase in fuel costs in the past year. The Board is also confronted by strong union pressure in contract negotiations; merely acceding to union demands for dental benefits has cost the Board $7-$8 million annually, leaving fewer dollars for educational services.

Another discouraging element is the serious erosion in teacher competence. As a result of great insistence from Affirmative Action to recruit under-represented groups, regular certification requirements gave way to alternative certification procedures, with the consequence that perhaps up to one-third of the staff requires in-service training in basic teaching skills. Because of the fiscal squeeze, many of the supervisors, consultants, and other support personnel who could have assisted with staff development were redeployed and are no longer available for that task.

It is easy for some educational pundits to speak of the management of decline as though it were an established science and as though a period of retrenchment provided a near ideal context for bold innovativeness. But when one examines the gritty reality represented by a school district such as Chicago, one is struck by the apparent hopelessness of the situation: it has more the feel of dilemma about it than of opportunity. In the face of a 13,000 pupil loss in the last year with the accompanying shrinkage in real

resources, the continuing proliferation of educational objectives and social missions at this juncture must be seen as a major obstacle to imaginative and confident decision-making.

3. Non-Quantifiable Benefits and Costs

The most critical elements in education, as in romance, usually turn out to be incomparable and unmeasurable. Just as one would not presume to place a dollar value on a good marriage so one would hesitate to put a price on a good liberal education. The same thing holds for bad marriages and bad education: the losses are incalculable. Despite the upsurge of such hard-nosed fads and technologies as "educational accountability", measurement and evaluation techniques, and zero-based budgeting, the concept of quality education remains elusive. Ordinarily, we can recognize qualitative differences, but attempting to put a dollar figure on those differences proves illusory. Admittedly, some measures of education's social utility in an aggregate sense may be derived, but at the personal, phenomenological level, the level at which the educational experience occurs, only instrumental outcomes seem quantifiable. The higher-order outcomes lie outside the domains of statistics and accounting.

The ineffable nature of educational processes and the non-quantifiable character of crucial educational outcomes present formidable barriers to rational, linear decision-making

for both classroom practitioner and senior policy-maker. At all levels of the educational enterprise value judgements must be made without the aid of any impartial, reliable method for estimating educational benefits and costs. Two salient examples may serve to illustrate the difficulty.

One of the hidden costs of public education, about which American educational leaders speak increasingly more freely, is the so-called "burned-out teacher syndrome". Medical directors report that more and more teachers are being referred by principals for psychiatric assistance. Administrators are hardpressed to know what to do when parents demonstrate to get some teacher removed who has given everything to that school for 15-20 years but her blood. One informed commentator speculated that lack of approbation may be a root cause of this syndrome: "Teachers can't cope forever in a no-win situation. They come to feel that they're the lowest of the low. The press, the media, and the kids themselves pick up this refrain. Salary increases don't seem to make up for the lack of appreciation by one's peers and by society at large - unless you've made them so hard and bitter that only money matters. I wish there was more research on this syndrome."

A staff counsellor in another jurisdiction observed that teachers, especially elementary teachers in the ghetto, are disillusioned: "The experienced teachers are 'tired already' - that is the best thing they can say. The sameness

and the routine get them down. We allow our teachers to remain dead and stale, to sit in the same room for years, locked into the school, without stimulation. Attendance, which is one indicator, is chronically bad: teachers tend to use up all their days of cumulative sick leave - especially before or after holidays. Teachers are the target of every attack. There's a lot of rampant nit-picking by principals in some schools. Without the principal's support, teachers become vulnerable to parents. Also, teachers feel a sense of failure because the school is expected to do too much - like running breakfast programs and helping mothers get their welfare cheques. Then there's the lack of mobility and promotion. This is a critical factor. There's no place to go - no further opportunity, slim hope."

An educational decision-maker conscientiously seeking an optimal solution might encounter some difficulty in reckoning the costs of that day-to-day degradation referred to as the "burned-out teacher syndrome".

Now, let's consider what a dream is worth. Since its founding in 1927, the City University of New York (CUNY) had operated on the basis of free tuition for every student. In 1970 Mayor Lindsay and the City Fathers were persuaded to introduce an Open Admission policy. (A riot in City College in Haarlem was partly responsible for the introduction of this policy some five years earlier than planned.) By that policy every high school graduate in New York City

was guaranteed a place in the University. It was understood by all that CUNY would be getting many students who were under-prepared. Open Admission was not an untried innovation, since various states have had for a long time a policy of admitting any resident high school graduate to higher education. But the significant difference in NYC was the commitment to the dream of providing social mobility for the underprivileged. According to a union spokesman, "Open Admission was not to be a cynical policy on the 'revolving door' pattern, where we would use Math courses to screen out students, leaving them to conclude that their failure was a function of their own lack of capacity. We repudiated that approach." Instead, the University instituted a comprehensive program of Remediation hoping to reduce the drop-out rate by providing remedial opportunities. As a result, in 1970 there was a dramatic influx of new students, with the freshman class almost doubling. In due course, thousands of those students graduated and are now successfully employed in productive work, constituting partial fullfilment of the dream of Open Admission.

Over the ensuing years the Open Admission policy has generated several notable controversies. One concerns the level of funding for Remediation. Union representatives point out that remedial costs in 1977-78 were grossly inadequate, amounting to roughly $30 million out of a total budget of $470 million (or about 6%). They argue vehemently

that many instructors are prepared to teach Remediation, but not in classes of 30. These particular students, it is asserted, require individual attention or seminars of 12-15 as the maximum. Al Shanker's aphorism is quoted in this connection, to the effect that "the one experiment that hasn't been tried in Education is adequate funding". By way of rebuttal, management spokesmen respond that "adequate funding" in Shanker's sense means infinite funding and that there is a point of diminishing returns where the marginal gain is not worth the additional expense. They insist that Remediation classes at their largest are 30 (on the register) with the average closer to 20. Finally, they allege that faculty are ruled by custom and it has become traditional to worship the small class uncritically without developing appropriate alternative modalities for matching teaching techniques with student needs and subject content.

The second controversy revolved around the issue of free tuition. When the City went to the Federal Government for a loan to avert bankruptcy, President Ford singled out CUNY as an instance of irresponsible management citing the free tuition policy. Secretary of the Treasury William Simon made the same statement. Given the City's dire straits, CUNY had little choice but to impose fees for the first time, ranging from $775 for Lower Division to $925 for Upper Division. Student enrolment in the first year of the new tuition policy (1976-77) dropped from 250,000 to 200,000.

Since the imposition of the fee structure was accompanied by a tuition assistance plan geared to family income, the net revenue gained was not as great as would perhaps appear on first sight, but the symbolism implicit in the historic change was quite clear.

Confronted by the conflict of the dream for social mobility vs. the dream of a balanced budget or by rival estimates of appropriate funding for Remediation programs, the uncommitted decision-maker should not expect to be guided to a rational solution by some cost-benefit formula - for this is the educational arena and, in this domain, value is in the eye of the beholder.

4. Uncertainty

Rational decision-making presupposes an environment with some considerable degree of orderliness and predictability. When an environment becomes fluid and capricious, one might rely on whimsey with as much success as on rationality.

The educational environment may have been relatively stable in the past. But increasingly in the present it gives evidence of being volatile and unpredictable. Given the growing number of uncontrolled variables, it becomes understandable why American legislators have shied away from grandiose master-plans for managing school decline.

Consider the profound impact of changes in life-style, such as the legalization of abortions. A state official in Albany pointed out that, in the first year that abortions

were made legal in New York state, there were 250,000 abortions performed for women who were state residents. By applying that same figure to each of the following thirteen years, he came up with a population loss of 3,250,000, a figure that is very close to the current, total, public school enrolment for the state. Perturbations of this magnitude must play havoc with any educational master-plan.

We cannot assume that present life-style patterns will continue. Officials in Sacramento observed that the contemporary retreat from child-bearing represented an aberration in the flow of human history; they cautioned against jumping to any conclusion that this phenomenon was going to be a permanent feature; and they adduced evidence of a local, anecdotal kind to support the theory that a shift in this aspect of modern life was already beginning - young women were showing a growing interest in having children.

It is anticipated that the next few years will see the perfecting of a technology for alternatives. Assuming that the alternative process is acceptable, we might see an upsurge in birth-rate based on an alternative mode of conception. Male progenitors could take up the slack created by the falling birth-rate of the conventional variety where women are central. The untold consequences of one such change in life-style makes accurate long-range forecasting a slippery business.

Even the common, garden-variety type of societal change can lead to embarrassing miscalculations. The Economic Development Board for the state of New York is responsible for doing population projections. They assumed a zero out-migration rate over a six-year period. Three of those years are now in. A state department official related the following story: "We're in the unenviable position of having to give school projections to school districts and institutions of higher learning. Up to three years ago, we were very successful in projecting those enrolments. Then something began to happen in New York state dramatically that almost destroyed us. We found we were out by 50,000 - 75,000 kids on a total public school population of around 3,200,000. In just about every grade there was an unanticipated drop of around 1½%. An expert on modelling advised us to convene five or six experts and construct a new model. But that's not where the problem is - our model is all right. And I'm not even worried about the birth-rate. It is the unexpected out-migration from the state that's been hurting us. We're experiencing one great big headache as a result." Retrospectively one can see that high taxes, high wages, and high fuel costs in the state persuaded many industries to relocate in the southwest, creating a significant out-migration of state residents. But hindsight is cold comfort to planners, demographers, and those public agencies who rely on their projections.

Recent staffing developments in New York City illustrate another kind of uncertainty. For a number of reasons (including abortions, an aging population, bad publicity, and an exodus of young married couples) the school enrolments have been dropping sharply. Over the two-year period, 1975-77, the city lost 70,000 students - and the rate of decline appears to be increasing. The present K-12 school population stands at 1,200,000. Owing to the drastic pupil reduction as well as the condition of near-bankruptcy, New York City laid off 20,000 teachers and paraprofessionals during that same two-year period, 1975-77. Additionally, class size was increased and the school day was lengthened by 90 minutes (which, it was alleged, created 8,000 lay-offs by itself). Negotiations in 1977 led to the abandonment of the 90-minute extension and the restoration of the traditional school day. Additional teachers were needed. When the Board went to the Preferred Recall List consisting of some 9,000 names, it found that only one out of seven teachers chose to come back. To its great astonishment the Board was faced with a severe teacher shortage, particularly in Special Education, Education for the Emotionally Disturbed, Science, Mathematics, and English. The Board found it necessary to advertise on the air to get minimally certified people to apply to sit the exams (to replace the highly qualified, experienced teachers who had been laid off one or two years before). When that

strategy did not prove entirely successful, the Board was constrained to mount an emergency summer program for 1978 in conjunction with City College (CUNY). Under this arrangement, the Board will pay the tuition fees for a 12-credit program running through June, July, and August while the College for its part will waive other student fees, such as the registration fee. So dire is the teacher shortage, particularly in Math and Science, that the Board finds itself compelled to come up with the substantial funds required by this program. Word is out in the Board offices that a Math teacher can be sure of a minimum of twenty years' employment in the city school system. Who could have anticipated such a bizarre turn-around back in 1975 when the drastic lay-offs were occurring?

A university admissions officer in upstate New York enumerated the following list of factors that could affect college enrolments:

- Outbreak of war or compulsory military service
- A change in the level of student support
- A rise in the birth-rate
- New public policies, such as utilizing universities to reduce the incidence of unemployment among the young
- Media support
- An upswing in the overall economy
- New industries starting up
- Changes in labour costs, energy costs, and the corporate tax structure

. Federal title money

. Another sputnik (or similar international incident)

. Introduction of a voucher system

. A revised G.I. Bill.

When this degree of uncertinty is added to many participants, multiple objectives, and the non-quantifiability of benefits and costs, we have a decision situation where traditional, rational, optimization models become inoperative.

III ASSESSMENT OF THE NON-HEROIC STRATEGY

The term "non-heroic strategy" as used in this paper is a derivative of the medical phrase, "heroic measures", meaning the intensive administration of the full panoply of medical science to a patient in extremity. It is not intended that non-heroic be equated with cowardly, faint-hearted, or non-therapeutic. A non-heroic strategy for the management of decline implies a policy characterized by parsimony, incrementalism, pragmatism, short-term perspectives, and a tolerance for the stress of dislocation. Non-heroic is the antithesis of idealistic, utopian, and grandiose; it is closer to the concept of "satisficing" than optimizing.

1. Merits

The non-heroic approach to the school crisis deserves respectful scrutiny. Reference will be made to four positive features.

First, the non-heroic style is unabashedly realistic. One may find even a degree of reassurance, if not comfort, in its non-sentimental assessment of the hard facts. A senior university administrator communicated something of that tone when he declared: "The response I get from some university personnel is that others may suffer decline but they themselves will prosper by inventing imaginative programs. By and large, that's most unlikely. Who was not conceived is not conceived. Who was aborted is aborted.

There is no evidence of any flood from the adult population. There are no higher graduation rates from high school". The non-heroic posture, to its credit, does not mind calling a spade a spade.

Secondly, the non-heroic strategy does allow for selective responsiveness at the state level to the most acute pains in the system. For example, a number of states have introduced early voluntary retirement schemes to counteract staff ossification, to provide employment opportunities for younger professionals, and to save money. Another instance of that ameliorative capability is the variety of "save-harmless" measures which are intended to cushion school districts from the disruptive consequences of a sharp decrease in state aid owing to severe enrolment decline.

Thirdly, the non-heroic approach favours a horizontal dispersion of responsibility for managing the crisis. The marked reluctance of state authorities to pre-empt the field is not to be seen as a form of moral abdication but as recognition that the decentralized approach has much to commend it: decisions will be taken by local individuals and groups who have a better feel for the environmental texture in their communities than would politicians or bureaucrats at the state capital.

Fourthly, the non-heroic orientation eschews the manpower-planning kind of technocracy and confidently puts

its faith in the operation of the free, open market. A top-level university officer observed: "The market seems to be a self-correcting mechanism. It is true that we do have controls and real limitations: budgets are limited; staff can't be moved around; we don't allow students into any program they want. Yet we would be in chaos if we tried to set rigid quotas. We simply can't forecast needs and interests. I'm impressed with the diseconomies of manpower planning in the Soviet Union: I know of an engineer there who wanted to be a jazz pianist. If we have the resources in place, we'll try to accommodate all the students interested, but no more new resources will be forthcoming. We'll end up in an intermediate position. We'll do a lot of talking. We'll cajole rather than control. In a fifth-year teacher education set-up as in Ontario, the free market may function even better than in New York where freshmen select institutions and not programs and don't choose majors until their second year. In addition, a higher level of awareness is obtained on the part of university graduates relative to Grade 12 students." It is generally recognized that, if a free market is to function well, individuals must have ready access to relevant information. In the dissemination of data about employment trends the Americans seem to be far ahead of Canada. A commitment to the non-heroic operation of the free market need not imply a passive, do-nothing laissez-faire philosophy.

2. Shortcomings

After acknowledging the many sound features in the non-heroic approach to enrolment decline, one has to admit to a certain sense of unease, if not outright disappointment. Something critical seems to be missing. What is it? To this observer, the missing element relates to some intangible aesthetic, moral, and psychological inadequacy; it is as though vision, hope, and courage were all lacking.

The non-heroic, being incrementalist in essence, suffers from managerial myopia. There is a tacit acceptance of the status quo - all the system requires is some fine tuning.

The non-heroic, being parsimonious in spirit, generates intergroup competitiveness and perpetuates materialistic attachments. There is a common assumption that the critical resources of this world are economic and that more money will solve our educational dilemmas.

The non-heroic, being guided by short-term pragmatic considerations, gives the impression of undirected drifting, without the stabilizing influence of historical perspective or sense of destiny.

The non-heroic, being fatalistic in its acceptance of social dislocation, creates a climate of helplessness and fear.

In the end, one is left wishing that a more satisfying, more humane, more redemptive approach were possible.

IV TOWARD A MORE REDEMPTIVE SPIRIT

Although the original intention of this paper was to present an analysis of American experience, the temptation to apply some of the lessons to the Ontario scene has proved irresistible. Herewith follow some specifications for an alternative approach that might surpass policies of aimless drift, coercive master-planning, punitive root-and-branch measures, and non-heroic strategies of many varieties.

The principles to be enunciated are derived from Jack R. Gibb's trust-level formulation, which this observer regards as the most powerful explanatory theory extant regarding personal, organizational, and social action. Trust theory postulates that the universally critical dimension in human behaviour is the trust-fear variable. Accordingly, social action will be facilitated to the extent that intervention is fear-reducing and trust-enhancing. Four discovery processes serve to raise trust levels and improve environmental quality; namely, personalization, openness, self-determination, and interdependence.

Because the theory is descriptive (not prescriptive) and because it is not wedded to any substantive or methodological elements, its use entails a continuing process of inquiry, discovery, and invention. Because mutual trust (like love) is relational, the theory cannot be translated into a technology (for, as someone has said, when courtship becomes a science, then what we have is not romance but seduction). Because of its interactive process orientation,

trust theory seems particularly appropriate for those perplexing decision situations characterized by many participants, multiple objectives, non-quantifiability of benefits and costs, and uncertainty.

An attempt will now be made to suggest some concrete proposals that will embody a more redemptive style based on the principles of trust theory. In the discussion, the abbreviations (P), (O), (S), and (I) will be used for the four discovery processes mentioned above. The scenario will be presented in alternating sections dealing with content (Proposals) and process (Commentary).

Proposals

Top-level government authorities will publicly re-affirm (1) the overriding priority to be accorded to the education of our children. Always priceless, in a period of declining birth-rates, our children become even more precious - if that is possible. The health and education of each boy and girl is intrinsically justifiable, without reference to industry's manpower demands, the appetite of the educational establishment, or the needs of political parties. Our kids rank No. 1.

This general statement would continue: (2) As a democratic society, we have not been sensationally successful in long-range planning. For whatever reasons, we tend to operate with a foreshortened time perspective. Had we been more sensitive to future developments, we might have

anticipated the current problems of decline and prevented some of the overexpansion that now plagues us. There is no need to look about for scape-goats. All of us who were aware of the trends - or should have been aware - are ultimately responsible for the situation in which we find ourselves. We ourselves own the problem.

The general statement continues: (3) Because of our collective responsibility for the current predicament, we are not prepared to see the consequences visited upon any sector of our society. We will not bail ourselves out at the cost of our children, their parents, or their teachers. In this jurisdiction, people are not expendable. We are proposing a set of guarantees, incentives, and save-harmless measures that constitute a charter of good faith.

The general statement might conclude with: (4) The next 20 years represent a new era in public education. Those altered circumstances require significant departures from arrangements of the past. We are proposing that in addition to the transitional policies for coping with the stress of readjustment, referred to in (3) above, there needs to be a fundamental revamping of the educational structure for the period ahead. It is hoped that all citizens may have an opportunity to contribute to that fascinating challenge of redesigning our educational system.

Commentary

It is anticipated that the general statement will engender public trust for the following reasons. The explicit delineation of a problem's magnitude breeds confidence (O). The public admission of infallibility (not guilt) and the expressed determination to take corrective action also foster confidence (O). The save-harmless provisions and the preeminence accorded to our children's welfare will reduce fear levels because such a compassionate display of concern will be highly reassuring (I). The opportunity for general public participation in the invention of a different educational system for the new age will also be fear-reductive (S). If the statement is made in a person-to-person style, in a role-free manner that avoids categorizing individuals as functionaries representing government, school boards, taxpayers, the teaching profession, etc., trust will be heightened (P). If the spokesman genuinely believed and deeply felt about what he was saying and cared about the people whom he was addressing, the effect would be immeasurably greater - for "trust grows in the penumbral shadow".

Proposals (continued)

The statement about kids being our top priority is not intended to be the usual kind of rhetoric. That commitment needs to be reflected in a variety of specific programs. An economist in Springfield, Illinois, mentioned two ways of picking up the slack in the system and better preparing

our children at the same time: (1) His investigations into the incidence of handicapped youngsters revealed that all the state and federal programs put together served no more than half of the total need; (2) He saw interesting possibilities for a large-scale national program of training and retraining in one of our critical, but neglected, contemporary dilemmas, namely, Energy Education.

Commentary

Whatever the substantive ramifications of this particular pledge turn out to be, they will be attention-getters, and perhaps even glamorous. In presenting them the spokesman will want to avoid two types of "toxic" management styles that reduce trust: (1) the leadership pose and (2) excessive persuasion or justification. Leadership postures are at variance with the personal, self-determining, interdependent processes. Pressuring, or the "hard-sell", also erodes trust by down-grading openness and self-determination.

Proposals (continued)

The so-called "charter of good faith" of clause (3) might incorporate the following sorts of save-harmless measures:

- A special Educational Adjustment Fund to finance the costs of the various transitional provisions;
- For senior teachers of n years' experience, a voluntary early retirement clause (without discount);

- For any teacher permanently withdrawing from the teaching force, before reaching retirement, a relocation gratuity on some sliding scale (à la Volkswagen);

- For unemployed teachers, assistance of various forms, including:
  - career counselling
  - retraining allowances
  - assistance with moving to a new job;

- A mobility incentive, whereby the province would reimburse boards for some of the extra costs involved in hiring experienced teachers from outside their own system;

- For university graduates planning to enter teaching, a government information service that provides "all you ever wanted to know about teacher employment prospects but didn't know where to ask".

- A "sunset" clause that would terminate the Educational Adjustment Fund and most of the extraordinary incentives and supports after five years.

Commentary

The foregoing provisions, and others like them, take us a long step toward a redemptive solution. Where non-heroic attitudes are sometimes characterized by punitiveness and covert strategizing, the redemptive approach affirms that people are paramount, that we care about them, that we have contributed to their problems, and that we will now contribute to the alleviation of their distress (I).

Proposal (continued)

The reordering of public education on a permanent basis beyond the transitional period of adjustment will require that our imaginations transcend current mind-sets. If escalating costs are to be brought under control and if

the educational experience itself is to be more satisfying, then we must consider ways to de-monopolize, de-institutionalize, decentralize, and de-control much of the apparatus. The following far out reforms are illustrative:

- Eliminate compulsory education altogether;
- Substitute for compulsion an incentive system, whereby both parents and children get allowances for school attendance;
- Introduce a voucher system to maximize client choice among educational opportunities;
- Teaching the young is a privilege and an honour; in order to maximize access to this opportunity, teaching careers will normally terminate after seven years (with exceptions);
- All administrative appointments will be term appointments;
- The province will encourage the emergence and supervise the operation of alternative mini-schools of varying kinds; proponents may be parents or teachers; size will be limited to 2-8 teachers (not all of whom must have paper credentials); school licenses lapse after five years (but are renewable).

Commentary

Gibb enunciates two criteria that seem relevant to the plan for long-term reorganization:

The first one is that "the effort must be discovery-oriented.... It is necessary to stress that the quality of the process of discovering is more important than the product of the social-change effort. The process must be humane.... Enduring and effective societal change does not come out of a dehumanizing process....This people-process is the product."

Gibb's second criterion is that "the effort is most effective if it nurtures diversity and emergence". He elaborates on this principle of diversity in the following passage:

> God or the cosmic process apparently designed some undeterminable number of social-discovery experiments, one of which is happening on the planet earth. The experiment is apparently leaderless, unstructured, emergent, blind (from the participant standpoint), and apparently has high diversity on several dimensions. From the standpoint of the participants in the pilot study, the purpose, experimental design, hypotheses being tested, and hoped-for-outcomes are all indeterminable. From the participant's viewpoint, what we see produced is both massive fear and massive trust....
>
> To move from this fanciful and cosmic level of speculation to more immediate perspective, I believe that diversity and emergence are enhancing conditions for all social change. We need the range of experiences, models, pilot studies, and data provided by the rich diversity of life as we know it. In fact, we need more diversity, more richness, and less control of the range of experience and models. At this point, people try anything that they have the energy, imagination, courage, and resources to try....As we learn to trust the human processes of diversity and emergence, we will move toward more and more trusting models of social living. I firmly believe this....
>
> Greater diversity, particularly on the high-trust side, of social models, innovative ideas, and pilot studies can take us to the frontiers of social change....
>
> The application of this principle of diversity to everyday life means that change in the schoolroom, factory, church, and clinic is best accomplished when we range widely in the tests, methods, and theories we use and when we encourage variation and innovation....

> In a free society, in an emergent workplace, in a free school, optimal diversity of social-change efforts is functional. Alternative models succeed or fail in practice - in the classroom, clinic, or home - not on the drawing board, in the theorist's mind, or in the administrator's office. It is difficult and perhaps impossible in practice to derive adequate change models directly from pure theory. At the present stage of our theory, the process of developing new models of society, work, or living seems to require some give and take, some trial and error.
>
> .....

At a time when all public institutions are suffering from public disenchantment, education is no exception. In some parts of the United States, there has been such an exodus from the public schools that the fragility of the institution has been fully exposed. If public education in Ontario is to survive the crisis of confidence that the stressful years ahead have in store for us, we might be wise to undertake our task of reappraisal in the most redemptive spirit possible.

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